

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY LISBON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8749
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
/AMCONSUL OPORTO 963
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA
USMISSION NATO
DIA WASHDC
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 LISBON 6803

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PO
SUBJECT: THE PS LEFT WING: OVERRATED BUT STILL RELEVANT

REFS: (A) LISBON A-260 DATED SEPT 24, 1976 (NOTAL),
(B) LISBON A138 DATED JUNE 11, 1976 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: THE PS LEFT WING IS MORE CURRENT OF OPINION
THAN AN ORGANIZED DISSIDENT MOVEMENT. ITS INFLUENCE WITHIN
THE SOCIALIST PARTY IS ON THE WANE, IT CURRENTLY IS NOT A
THREAT TO THE PARTY LEADERSHIP. MARIO SOARES AND THE MODERATES
ARE FIRMLY IN CONTROL. END SUMMARY.

1. IS THERE A PS LEFT WING?: THE CONVENTIONALY WISDOM HERE
HOLDS THAT THE SOCIALIST PARTY IS DIVIDED, PERHAPS IRRECON-
CILABLY, INTO TWO CAMPS: THE MODERATE "SOCIAL DEMOCRATS"
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AND A MARXIST-INSPIRED "LEFT WING."

-- THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS: IN ADDITION TO MARIO SOARES, PROMINENT MEMBERS ARE SAID TO INCLUDE: PARLIAMENTARY LEADER FRANCISCO SALGADO ZENHA; MINISTER-WITHOUT-PORTFOLIO JORGE CAMPINOS; DEPUTY JAIME GAMA; COMMUNICATIONS SECRETARY MANUEL ALEGRE; AND EDUCATION MINISTER MARIO SOTTOMAYOR CARDIA. ALL EXCEPT CAMPINOS ARE MEMBERS OF THE PS NATIONAL SECRETARIATX.

-- THE LEFT WING: LEADERS REPORTEDLY INCLUDE AGRICULTURE MINISTER ANTONIO LOPES CARDOSO; ASSEMBLY LEADER ANTONIO REIS; AND UNION ORGANIZER AIRES RODRIGUES, ALL NATIONAL SECRETARIAT MEMBERS. OTHER FREQUENTLY CITED AS BEING PARTY LEFT WINGERS ARE LABOR LEADER KALIDAS BARRETO AND DEPUTIES CARLOS CANDAL, CARLOS LAGE, AND JOSE LUIS NUNES.

2. YES, NO, AND MAYBE: THOSE IN THE BEST POSITION TO KNOW ABOUT THE EXISTENCE OF A PS LEFT WING DISAGREE.

-- WELL-INFORMED, NON-SOCIALIST POLITICAL OBSERVERS INSIST THERE IS A SPLIT OF MAJOR POTENTIAL SIGNIFICANCE WITHIN THE PS. MEMBERS OF THE "LEFT WING" ARE FREQUENTLY DESCRIBED AS COMMUNIST "SUBMARINES" PLANTED WITHIN THE PS TO BE CALLED UPON WHEN THE TIME IS RIPE. THESE OBSERVERS CITE, AS "PROOF" OF THEIR THESIS, THE PROVOCATEUR ROLE PLAYED BY MANUEL SERRA PRIOR TO HIS DEFECTION FOLLOWING THE 1974 PS NATIONAL CONGRESS.

-- PS LEADER MARIO SOARES FLATLY DENIES DISSENSION WITHIN THE PARTY OR THE EXISTENCE OF A PS LEFT WING. HE ACKNOWLEDGES, HOWEVER, THERE ARE VARIOUS "VIEWPOINTS," ADDING THAT DIFFERENCES OF OPINION ARE NORMAL AND HEALTHY IN ANY DEMOCRATIC ORGANIZATION.

-- THE REPUTED LEADERS OF THE PS LEFT WING SUPPORT SOARES BUT ARE NOT ABOVE A BIT OF SELF PROMOTION WHICH FUELS SPECULATION. A TYPICAL RESPONSE FROM ANTONIO REIS: "THERE ARE NO WINGS WITHIN THE PARTY. THERE MAY BE DISAGREEMENTS ON SPECIFIC ISSUES AND THERE ARE DIFFERING JUDGEMENTS ABOUT THE PACE TOWARD SOCIALISM, BUT THERE IS NO DISAGREEMENT ON THE FUNDAMENTAL OBJECTIVE."

3. WHO IS RIGHT?: THERE IS AN ELEMENT OF TRUTH IN ALL OF THESE VIEWS.

-- NON-PS OBSERVERS ARE CORRECT IN POINT TO SIGNIFICANT
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DIVERGENCES AMONG THE SOCIALISTS. THE DIFFERENCES ARE THERE; THEY ARE REAL.

-- MARIO SOARES IS RIGHT IN SUGGESTING THAT THE IMPORTANCE OF THESE DIFFERENCES HAS BEEN EXAGGERATED.

-- THE LEFT WINGERS ARE CORRECT IN HIGHLIGHTING THE UNITY OF PURPOSE WHICH JOINS ALL PARTY ELEMENTS.

4. DOES IT MAKE A DIFFERENCE?: DISCLAIMERS FROM MARIO

SOARES NOTWITHSTANDING, THERE IS A PS LEFT WING. BUT THE SOCIAL DEMOCRAT-LEFT WING DICHOTOMY IS MISLEADING. THE LEFT WING SEEMS TO BE MORE A CURRENT OF OPINION THAN AN ORGANIZED DISSIDENT MOVEMENT. ITS INFLUENCE IS ON THE WANE. IT PROBABLY INCLUDES ONLY FIFTEEN TO TWENTY PERCENT OF THE PARTY ACTIVISTS, AND THAT ESTIMATE COULD BE ON THE HIGH SIDE. JAIME GAMA -- NO LEFT WINGER TO BE SURE BUT A PERSON IN A POSITION TO KNOW AS THE NATIONAL SECRETARIAT LINK WITH THE REGIONAL FEDERATIONS -- SETS LEFT-WING NUMERICAL STRENGTH AT 17-19 ON THE 150-MEMBER NATIONAL COMMITTEE AND THREE ON THE 14-MEMBER NATIONAL SECRETARIAT. GEOGRAPHICALLY, THE STRENGTH OF THE LEFT WING TENDS TO PARALLEL THAT OF THE PCP. THE LEFT WING IS STRONGEST IN THE DISTRICTS OF SETUBAL AND SANTAREM AND THE MUNICIPALITIES OF OPORTO AND AVEIRO. KNOTS OF SUPPORT EXIST IN VIANA DO CASTELO, COIMBRA, CHAVES, AND A FEW LOCATIONS IN THE ALENTEJO. DESPITE THE EFFORTS OF YOUTH SECRETARY ALBERTO ARONS DE CARVALHO, THE SOCIALIST YOUTH ORGANIZATION REMAINS A FERTILE GROUND FOR RECRUITMENT.

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5. PAST PCP BLUNDERS HURT: IN RETROSPECT, THE COMMUNISTS COMMITTED A CATASTROPHIC BLUNDER IN COUNSELING MANUEL SERRA AND OTHERS OF SIMILAR PERSUASION TO WALK OUT OF THE PS FOLLOWING THEIR UNSUCCESSFUL EFFORT TO SEIZE CONTROL OF THE PARTY APPARATUS AT THE 1974 NATIONAL CONGRESS. THE NUMBERS TELL THE STORY. THE MODERATE SOARES-LED SLATE DEFEATED SERRA AND COMPANY BY THE COMFORTABLE, BUT NOT OVERWHELMING MARGIN OF 466 TO 271 ON THE KEY VOTE ON NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP. MOST OF THE SERRA CADRES HAVE LONG SINCE PASSED INTO POLITICAL OBLIVION AFTER FOLLOWING HIM INTO THE POPULAR SOCIALIST FRONT A LESSON NOT LOST ON THOSE WHO HAVE CONTEMPLATED LEAVING THE PS. DESPITE THE RELATIVE WEAKNESS OF THE PS LEFT WING, THE SPECTER OF A PARTY SPLIT IS VERY MUCH ON SOARES'S MIND. HE IS ON RECORD AS STATING THAT: "...ANY SCHISM WITHIN THE PARTY WOULD BE EXTREMELY GRAVE FOR PORTUGUESE
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DEMOCRACY AND COULD HASTEN THE RETURN OF DICTATORSHIP." THE PS NON-ALLIANCE POLICY IS IN PART A CONCESSION TO THE PERCEIVED STRENGTH OF THE PARTY'S LEFT WING. THIS SAID, THE LEFT WING NEVERTHELESS SERVES A VARIETY OF USEFUL PURPOSES:

6. THE LEFT WING -- A BLESSING IN DISGUISE:
-- BY LAYING CLAIM TO THE LEFT CONSTITUENCY, IT HELPS IDENTIFY THE BOUNDARY WITH THE PCP; THE ANTI-COMMUNISM OF PS LEFT WINGERS BUTTRESSED BY THE PS NO-ALLIANCE POLICY HELPS DEFINE THE SOCIALISTS AS A CLEAR ALTERNATIVE TO THE COMMUNISTS.
-- THE LEFT WINGERS COLLECTIVELY ARE AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN THE PARTY'S LINKS WITH ITS WORKING CLASS BASE. SIGNIFICANTLY, PARTY LEADER SOARES CHOSE LOPES CARDOSO AND AIRES RODRIGUES TO ACCOMPANY HIM IN A CAMPAIGN SWING OVER THE WEEKEND THROUGH THE TRADITIONAL PCP STRONGHOLD OF MARINHA GRANDE. A FULL-SCALE PURGE OF THE PS LEFT WING, AS HAS BEEN SUGGESTED BY SOME INCLUDING A FEW PARTY CONSERVATIVES LIKE VICTOR CUNHA REGO, WOULD PLACE STRAINS UPON SOCIALIST CLAIMS TO BE AN AUTHENTIC "PARTY OF THE LEFT." A PURGE EFFORT NOW WOULD GIVE THE PCP A GRATUITOUS BOOST IN THE HEAD-TO-HEAD COMPETITION FOR CONTROL OF THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT.
-- PRESENCE OF THE LEFT WINGERS HELPS TO PROVIDE THE SOCIALISTS WITH ADDITIONAL PROTECTIVE COVER ON THE LEFT AS THE GOVERNMENT MOVES TO TAKE TOUGH MEASURES ESSENTIAL TO GETTING THE COUNTRY MOVING.

SOME SOCIALISTS WOULD GO SO FAR AS TO SUGGEST THAT IF
A LEFT WING DID NOT EXIST ONE WOULD HAVE TO BE INVENTED.

7. THE MODERATES ARE IN CHARGE: ALTHOUGH PLACING LIMITS
ON THE PARTY'S FREEDOM OF ACTION, THE LEFT WING IS NOT
NOW A THREAT TO THE PS LEADERSHIP. MARIO SOARES AND
THE MODERATES ARE FIRMLY IN CONTROL. PREPARATIONS FOR
THE UPCOMING PS NATIONAL CONGRESS MAKE THAT ABUDANTLY
CLEAR (REF A). THE LEFT IS KEEPING ITS HEAD DOWN.
SIGNIFICANTLY, THE RISING STARS OF THE PARTY INCLUDE
SOTTOMAYOR CARDIA, JAIME GAMA, MEDEIROS FERREIRA, JORGE
CAMPINOS, AND ANTONIO BARRETO. NOT A LEFT WINGER AMONG
THEM.

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